

**REMARKS**

This is in response to the Office Action mailed 06/25/2008.

Election of claims 1-10 without traverse is hereby confirmed.

Claims 1-10 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Alband (WO 99/55600) in view of Tessier (US 5,073,694) and Thompson (US 5,083,852). Applicant respectfully traverses.

While Alband discloses that it is desirable to eliminate burrs on the inside of a valve stem, neither Alband, Tessier, nor Thompson actually disclose that laser-drilled valve stems suffer from any drawbacks. Accordingly, the particular problem at issue is not evident from these three references. Tessier discloses problems with dross involved in laser-cutting (which, strictly, is perhaps not exactly the same as laser-drilling), but it would not necessarily have been assumed that such problems would arise or cause problems in laser-drilling a valve stem.

Also, Tessier is quite clear about having a flow of liquid through the work piece into which the dross falls and is carried away. Clearly, the combination of Alband and Tessier does not arrive at the claimed feature of sealing the fluid in the valve stem before laser-drilling. Thompson is apparently cited for that proposition, but laser beam stop cells in Thompson are for a completely different purpose. It is clearly not related to laser-drilling of any kind (to the contrary, the cell is transparent to the laser and contains an absorbent fluid. The Office Action states that Tessier is also cited to establish the level of skill in the art, but Thompson is not in the valve stem manufacturing art and, in any event, the level of skill does not remedy the fact that Thompson does not suggest sealing a work piece such as in Tessier in order to conduct laser-drilling.

It is thus submitted that a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established.

Likewise, as to independent claim 3, and claims 4-10 depending directly or indirectly thereon, as set forth above, Thompson is not a sufficient basis to modify Tessier to seal a valve stem being laser-drilled. There is no reason given and no *prima facie* case established for such modification.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance.

Examination and reconsideration of the application is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

September 25, 2008

Date

By: /Ted K. Ringsred/

Ted K. Ringsred, Reg. No.: 35,658

Telephone No.: 651-736-5839

Office of Intellectual Property Counsel

3M Innovative Properties Company

Facsimile No.: 651-736-3833